

On Finishing *Infinite Jest*

NOTE: For those who have actually read *Infinite Jest*, you'll probably get more out of my very spoiler-heavy summary of [what happens just after the end of the book](#).

I don't remember starting *Infinite Jest*. I don't even remember buying it. I remember seeing its bulk and oddly-entrancing cover in the basement of the seminary coop. But the price sticker on the back shows I bought it on sale at a Borders. I don't think I'd read anything by DFW when I bought it. I can't remember why I would have. I very rarely read novels. Did someone recommend it? I can't imagine who. Maybe I just thought, I need something long to take on this trip.

I remember reading chapter 2 (Eredy Waits for Pot) the week I spent in Boston after I got back from Europe. So I must have taken it to Europe. So I probably bought it at the San Francisco Westfield Borders; that was the bookstore I shopped at back then.

Did I start it in Europe? Around page 750, I found a note I couldn't read in a hand I didn't recognize with a symbol I couldn't understand. But it was stamped with the address of our German hotel. Although I don't remember having a room in the hotel myself; I just remember sleeping in other people's rooms. I must have had a room, though, right?

That week in Boston I tried to write a book. Then I got sick. I stopped leaving the apartment. I stopped eating. I went a bit bats, I suppose. But it was getting sick that start of it, some kind of bad cold or something. I remember that. It didn't leave me with much interest in swallowing food.

I remember taking the novel to the cafe on the corner. I remember the cafe being largely empty, huge lakes of golden light streaming in through the window, making everything glow. Time seemed to be slowed down, every moment made up of beautiful frames. And I read about Eredy waiting for pot.

My apartment at the time was a dingy place. My roommates and I had moved to San Francisco and the place was left empty except for the collecting dust. It was a big place, held three people before we left, and I had it to myself, to go mad in.

I next remember reading it in my new place in San Francisco, which I got later that year. I remember thinking it didn't make much sense and had only a handful of good parts. I dusted it off again at my new place in Boston for *Infinite Summer*, starting from where I left off. But around page 500, I realized it wasn't a bunch of isolated stories like I'd assumed. As the *Aventura* kicked shit into the Antioi's door I realized I'd been missing the point. On a trip to DC, I flipped back to check a detail and was shocked to find whole swathes of things I didn't even recognize, whole chapters I'd not only forgotten but showed no signs of ever having read, rereading them didn't jog a single memory.

The whole book is laced through with mocking cracks at this disconnected style, like a preemptive apology. And the ending really doesn't help matters. But in the middle it is truly grand, some of the best fiction ever. I just hope that I'll remember it.

You should follow me on twitter [here](#).

September 16, 2009